Irwin T. Bode

Irwin T. Bode was forty-six years old when he came to the Missouri Department of Conservation. He was born in Keokuk, Iowa, in 1891 and grew up there. In 1915 he took his bachelor of science degree in forestry from Iowa State College, where he had been active in student affairs, was coach of the college gym team, and held student assistantships in the forestry and botany departments.

After graduation he got a job in the Indian Service as a forester, but that was of short duration. He transferred to a job in Hays, Kansas, supervising an experimental forest nursery there. He left that to enlist in the Army during World War I, and served in the field artillery.

After military service he returned to Iowa State, teaching on the forestry faculty while earning his master s degree. In September, 1921, Iowa started an extension forestry program and Bode had charge of organizing it and served as state extension forester for eleven and one-half years. There is also an indication in the records that he served as director for two years of the American School of Wildlife Protection at McGregor, Iowa, during this period. This undoubtedly was a moonlighting job.

In 1931, J. N. Ding Darling led a fight to take conservation out of politics in Iowa and was successful in getting a bipartisan conservation commission established-the first such in the United States. In February, 1932, Bode took on the job of organizing this agency as chief executive for that commission, presaging his later work in Missouri.

Bode remained there only three years, leaving in July, 1935, to accept a post-at the invitation of J. N. Ding Darling-with the U. S. Biological Survey in Washington as organizer of the cooperative wildlife research units. Research units were a concept of Aldo Leopold s, who felt that game management needed its own scientifically trained men. Up to this time, such wildlife workers as there were came from the ranks of other disciplines-foresters, entomologists or other biological interests.

Darling had taken Leopold s concept and created a cooperative research unit at Iowa State, with the Iowa Conservation Commission putting up one-third of the cost, the University providing services and materials as its one-third, and Darling dug into his own pocket to come up with the rest.

When he went to Washington as head of the U. S. Biological Survey, Darling brought the wildlife research unit idea with him, and in 1935 succeeded in getting the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute (SAAMI) to put up one-third of the cost of setting up research units at land-grant colleges. State conservation agencies and the land-grant colleges contributed the other two-thirds.

He asked Bode to help organize this program when the federal government took over the SAAMI funding role in 1936, and research units were established at land-grant colleges in nine states. Missouri became the tenth state to establish a cooperative wildlife research unit after Bode became director here.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture got interested in the new field of wildlife management about this time and hired Bode away from the Biological Survey in November, 1936, to organize wildlife conservation in its Extension Service. He was serving as senior biologist with the U. S. Extension Service when he was selected to become director of conservation for the new Missouri Conservation Commission in November, 1937.

Looking at his career, it is apparent that Bode had a lot of experience in organizing new programs, and most of his career had been concerned with extension-type work. This was to color his thinking as he organized the Missouri program, and a number of early Missouri Department employees came from extension backgrounds.

The Department of Conservation has been fortunate in having directors with the

WASHINGTON MAN TO WILDLIFE COMMISSION

Irwin T. Bode Named to Succeed Ramsey

ST. LOUIS, Oct. 15 — (AP) — Missouri's conservation commission made ready to day to turn over its affairs Nov. 15 to Irwin T. Bode of Washington, D. C., chief conservationist of the bureau of biological survey, permanent director.

Bode's appointment was announced late yesterday by E. Sydney Stephens, chairman of the newly created commission. He will succeed Frank Ramsey of Jefferson City, who was named as acting director last July.

The new director will administer the wild life amendment to the state constitution, adopted by the voters last November. The amendment created the conservation commission, giving it broad powers in all conservation matters as well as complete fish and game control.

In selecting the new director, the commission followed the suggestion of Gov. Lloyd C. Stark, who several months ago said he believed the state should choose one of the experts of the federal conservation service as director of the commission. At that time he said he knew of no one in Missouri who was qualified to meet the specialized requirements of the position.

Jefferson City paper announced Bode s appointment,

qualities needed for the times. In Bode s day a new, weak Department needed to gain its independence and to prove itself. Conceived as an agency based on science and freedom from political preference-and interference— Bode fought for recognition of that fact. He tried to hire the best technical staff available at the time, and he urged his technicians to plan the future of wildlife and forestry. Bode believed in long-range planning, which would have been inconceivable if personnel were to turn over every four years.

Bode shunned politicians, insofar as he could. He much preferred that the Conservation Federation stand between the Department and the legislature, and never went before legislative committees unless summoned. Where most department directors appeared at budget hearings to defend their programs and funds requested, he sent Montie Glover, his fiscal chief. No employees were allowed to participate in or even discuss politics. A quick way to get turned off was to introduce one s self as a friend of politician so-and-so. Under Bode, any preferment a politician might expect simply wasn t there. They got the same courteous treatment any other citizen would get.

The same wasn t necessarily true of politicians treatment of Bode. Some representatives and senators played a rough game when they summoned Bode before their committees. After an hour or two of verbal abuse, which he bore with stoic fortitude, Bode would smile that tight little smile of his and shake their hands as he departed. What such scenes must have cost him inwardly one can only guess.

Bode was so determined to keep the Department out of politics that it was almost an obsession with him, and one wonders if he had not been burned politically when he was director in Iowa. Darling s efforts to take that commission out of politics did not have a long-lasting effect.

Along those lines, Joseph Jaeger Jr., who had been a forester with the Department for a number of years, had an interesting anecdote about Bode.

I had this opportunity where the Park Board wanted to hire me as director of parks, Jaeger said. There were three Republicans

Irwin T. Bode had a history of successful development of new programs before he became director of Missouri Conservation ***Department.***

and three Democrats on the Park Board, and they thought I ought to go over and pay a courtesy call on Governor Donnelly, which I did.

Then I went by headquarters on High Street and went by Mr. Bode s office to thank him and tell him that I was going to be chief of parks . . . . and I got my ass chewed out! For leaving a good Department to go with a political thing like that. Instead of saying I m glad to see one of my personnel take charge of . . . he was upset about it.

At forty-six years of age, Bode, with his forestry training and background, appeared backward and old-fashioned to the very junior wildlife biologists, fresh out of college and eager to spread their wings. But they stood in awe of him, too.

Arthur Hugh Denney, one of the early biologists, said, Bode was a good man for the time. He had a bulldog tenacity of staying with what he believed in. He probably took a lot of unfair abuse, but at a time when it took a dedicated leader, he was a practical manager and public administrator.

Another one of those early biologists, Allen Reed Twichell recalls, Bode wasn t very easy to know. He had a stack of papers he was signing as he interviewed me for the job. What do you know about conservation? he asked, as he continued to sign those papers.

I made a little speech and he asked a few more questions. I don t think he d have recognized me later; just kept signing those papers. We young guys thought he was old-fashioned and backward, but he was a lot older than we were. I think he was good at a time when we needed somebody to lay down the law to the legislature. He leaned over backwards about not fraternizing with the legislature.

Bode had his own ideas about how things should be done, and this sometimes caused differences with strong-willed employees with ideas of their own.

Townsend Godsey, first Department Information chief, eventually resigned because he couldn t get along with Bode.

Bode was distrustful of newspaper people, Godsey said. He had a distrust of the news media. He could be pretty dictatorial, too. That made it easy for me to pull up stakes. He definitely ran the show and didn t take much advice from anybody, but Sydney Stephens.

But others felt Bode was always receptive to new ideas. In the early days especially, ideas came thick and fast as new biologists tried their wings, and most got a cordial reception from Bode so long as they were based on facts.

Charles H. Callison, who was Information chief under Bode some time later, said, I was always a little in awe of him and nearly everybody was. He kept himself at a distance, which is a device some administrators use. When he wanted to see somebody he would pass the word to his secretary, Bettye Hornbuckle, and she would call up and say, Mr. Bode wants to see you. You were supposed to jump. Bode never called you himself, always through the secretary. Many of my colleagues would start to shake when they got that message from the front office.

Biologist Jack Stanford remembers, He wasn t a mixer. He seemed so remote to most of us that he was like a monument out there. And in later years Bettye Hornbuckle perpetu-

ated his isolation by protecting him from others. But he had *something*, or he wouldn t have survived all those years or held us together so long.

The picture emerges of an uptight, aloof man. But others recall that when the Bodes came to Jefferson City they entered into the social swim immediately. Both were bridge players, and Bode was interested in woodworking and belonged to a group of business and government men also involved in woodworking as a hobby. Former employees Charles and Elizabeth Schwartz recall taking their youngsters and spending Christmas eves with the Bodes, who had no children of their own but enjoyed others children. They always were gracious hosts.

Mrs. Bode initiated a social group called Conservation Wives that met once a month to dine and play cards. She took it upon herself to instill social graces into the wives of the young biologists and foresters, and urged them to play bridge, though she tolerated a game of rummy. She took an interest in the Department, and tried to get employees to project an image of gentility. She also was solicitous of Bode s welfare.

Stanford recalls a softer side to the stern facade Mr. Bode presented to most employees. Mrs. Bode came to me one day and-asked if I d do her a favor. Please call him Ping when you re with him. It would please him so much.

Ping Bode was the name of a baseball player of the day and I. T. Bode was pleased to be called Ping, himself. Stanford said: Only Jay Morrow, Montie Glover and I called him Ping, but he loved it. I called him Ping one week and the next week he called me and said, Let s go fishing.

But he was a man under terrific pressures, steering a ship that was in the process of being built as he sailed it. He distrusted politicians and was not at ease in formal situations. Biologist Hugh Denney recalls, Arthur Clark [chief of fish and game] probably had more charm in dealing with the public than Bode ever thought of having. Bode had the technical knowledge but didn t have the charm and persuasion. Bode just didn t go over at all and we tried to *not* get Bode involved in public meetings. He could stir up as much

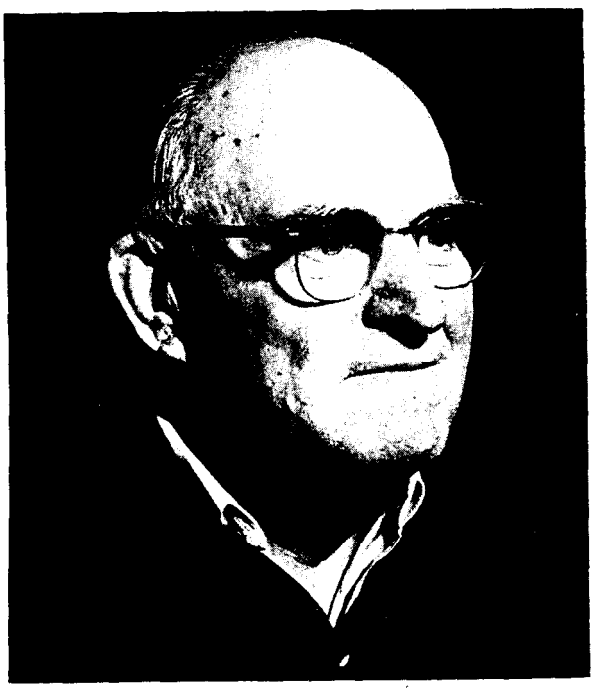
Jay B. Morrow became Bode's closest friend and associate and carried much of Bode's burden in latter years before his untimely death in ***1956.***

Rose Cliff Hotel at Van Buren was a gathering place for conservationists. Proprietor/host Ben Davis (below) was a gifted amateur botanist.

trouble as he could solve . . . . Bode had a temper and when he thought he was in the right, all hell couldn t sway him.

On the other hand, Biologist John Slim Funk remembers fondly, We spent the night at the old Rose Cliff Hotel in Van Buren and Bode was really in his element there. We sat around on the veranda, had drinks and he was talking with some of the old-time people there, and the man who ran the Rose Cliff, Ben Davis. In a situation like that Bode was relaxed and enjoyed himself.

Davis was an interested amateur conservationist and the Rose Cliff Hotel was a gathering place for federal and state conservation workers for many years. Its screened-in porch and lobby became a sort of Athens of the Ozarks, as the latest theories and practices of conservation were discussed there. Bode held an esteemed place in those gatherings, but Funk thought he felt ill at ease with



younger members of the Department.

The employee who got to Bode s heart was his assistant director, Jay B. Morrow. Jay was his best friend, possibly the only close friend he had. In Bode s latter years with the Department, Morrow handled most of the public meetings and took many burdens from Bode s back. Jay s untimely death of a heart attack in 1956 was a great blow to Bode.

There is no doubt Bode was an able administrator and extremely good at launching new programs. His background testifies to that. It also is obvious that Syd Stephens considered this new Department his baby, and Bode consulted frequently with him as to which course to take. A close friendship grew up between the two, and Bode genuinely felt a personal as well as professional loss with Stephens death in 1948.

Bode s relationship with the other commissioners he worked for was never as close. Bode had a quick temper and there were some stormy sessions, with Bode threatening to resign and Stephens and Bettye Hornbuckle exercising all their charms to smooth things over.

Bettye Hornbuckle, his secretary, said Bode delegated authority. He gave you a job and let you do it. And he was loyal to his employees. Changes in the Department in the early years were Bode s, but he worked very closely with Mr. Stephens.

Bode could be tight with a dollar, too, a trait which filtered down through the ranks so that everyone tried to wring the most they could from funds available to them. In fact, closeness (even cheapness) became a sort of fiscal trademark of the Department. In common with many others who had been scarred by the Great Depression, Bode always feared that the next year would see a downturn in fiscal fortune. Every year at budget time the instructions would come down to not anticipate any more funds than the present year s, and to include options for belt-tightening, if necessary.

One amusing anecdote about Bode s closeness with money (which, incidentally, was true of the Commission as well), concerned an employee who went to Mr. Bode and told him that he had received an offer of a job that paid $5,000 more per year than he was presently making.

Stay with me, son, Mr. Bode told him. I ll see that you re taken care of.

Sure enough. The following month the employee got a $5 per month raise!

Bode was respected nationwide by colleagues in conservation and served as president of the prestigious International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. It is true that he was dominated by E. Sydney Stephens, whose dream this ship of state was. In order to hold his job, he was going to have to fashion and steer the ship as Stephens envisioned it.

The question arises: how much of the organization and running of the Department was Bode s and how much Stephens ? According to those who worked most closely with the two men, they shared a common dream. Bode had the practical government experience to organize and run the Department,

Bettye Hornbuckle Gibson was ***secretary*** to Wilbur ***Buford and became Bode's administrative assistant. She played a major role in early Department history.***

and in close consultation with Stephens, they fashioned the Missouri Department of Conservation, developed its initial programs and the philosophic base upon which it still rests. They mutually fought for it in those early years of turmoil, and held it together during the lean years of World War II.

Syd Stephens may have had the dream, but it was I. T. Bode who made it a reality.